Prasar Bharati has informed that a 24 hours News Channel was launched on 3rd November, 2003 which provides free to air round the clock news, which is objective and unbiased, to the public so as to inform and educate them. The chennel is available in both the terrestrial and satellite mode. It is the only terrestrial news channel in the country.

(c) Prasar Bharati has informed that the DD News Channel is the most popular news channel in all homes and the second most watched news channel in cable and satellite homes ahead of many established news channels.

(d) Prasar Bharati has informed that the steps taken to improve the popularity of this channel include hiring of popular anchors from open market, new set and new montage along with new signature tune for news bulletins, hourly news templates, running news scroll, giving time slots to reputed outside Producers for Sponsored programmes and also hiring the services of well known media persons for anchoring in-house production.

Rights for Cricket and Tennis Events

2106. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the rights for cricket and tennis events were acquired without any estimation or justification;

(b) whether it led to wide fluctuations in the costs of rights fee per match;

(c) whether DD failed to develop a rational basis for calculation of opportunity cost; and

(d) if so, the details thereof including the estimates per event?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) to (d) The .Prasar Bharati has informed that before bidding for acquiring telecast rights for any sporting event, they take into account interest of the general public in a particular sporting event, potential for revenue generation from the event *vis-a-vis* likely loss of revenue from non-telecast of normal programmes during that time. The broadcast rights are acquired

for the event as a whole and not on match to match basis. In respect of few sporting events, the C&AG had pointed out deficiency in calculation of opportunity cost. Consequent to this, the Prasar Bharati has issued instructions in April, 1999 laying down the manner in which opportunity cost has to be calculated.

Guidelines for Uplinking of News Channels

2107. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether any fresh guidelines have been framed for uplinking of News Channels after rejection of the application of a prominent news channel; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and whether the same channel has applied afresh for uplinking?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) The Guidelines for uplinking of News & Current Affairs TV channels from India, issued on 26.3.2003, have been revised on 28.8.2003. The revised eligibility criteria is available on this Ministry's website *(http://. www. mib. nic. in).*

The Ministry had received an application from M/s Media Content & Communications Services (India) Pvt. Ltd. (MCCS), seeking permission to uplink their news channel namely "STAR NEWS" channel from India on 20.6.2003. However, after the revision of eligibility criteria of the guidelines on 28.8.2003, MCCS was advised to conform to the provisions laid down in the revised eligibility criteria. As such, MCCS has submitted fresh application on 22.9.2003, for permission to uplink STAR NEWS channel from India.

Permission for KU Band Signals

2108. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Andhra Pradesh has been requesting the Central Government to permit cable TV operators to receive KU-Band signals for televising educational programmes;